



The Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) 2007 annual wolf program report summarizes successful efforts to implement the approved state plan to the extent allowed by federal regulations. FWP leads wolf monitoring, directs conflict management, coordinates and authorizes research, and leads outreach efforts. FWP works closely with tribes, a variety of other state and federal agencies, interested organizations and individuals to continue the transition to managing wolves like other wildlife. For now, wolves are still listed.

Montana's wolf conservation and management plan is based on the work of the wolf advisory council, a diverse working group. Its balanced approach ensures the long-term success of wolf recovery in a landscape where people live, work, and recreate. The plan:

- recognizes wolves as a native species and part of Montana's wildlife heritage,
- allows wolves to find their place on the landscape similar to other wildlife, and
- addresses and resolve conflicts.

2007 Highlights

Wolf Numbers

- The population is secure but dynamic. Wolves share a landscape with people. Like other wildlife species, Montana's wolf population is subject to checks and balances, including strong reproduction in some areas, disease, vehicle strikes, and mortality due to conflicts with people.
- As of December 31, 2007, the minimum Montana wolf population estimate was 422 wolves in 73 verified packs, 39 of which qualified as a "Breeding Pair." That's about a 34% increase from last year.
 - Northwest Montana Endangered Area: 213 wolves in 36 verified packs, 23 Breeding Pairs.
 - Southern Montana Experimental Area: 209 wolves in 37 packs, 16 Breeding Pairs.
- The majority of the increase was in far western Montana from the south end of the Bitterroot Valley to northwestern Montana. The Montana wolf population appears more strongly influenced by the Idaho population than the Yellowstone National Park wolf population. Twelve packs straddling the Montana / Idaho border are counted in the Montana population. Four other Montana / Idaho border packs are counted in the Idaho population. Additionally the Montana population grew of its own accord.
- One hundred two wolf mortalities were documented in 2007, 72% of which was livestock related (n=73 wolves). The remaining mortalities were: 7 illegal, 6 car/train strikes, 1 legal harvest in Canada, 7 incidental and agency-related, 3 natural, 1 incidental snare, 4 unknown.

Wolf Distribution

- Statewide, wolf distribution remained about the same. New 2007 packs established primarily in northwest and far western Montana. But wolves are great travelers and could show up anywhere in Montana. In 2007, FWP received wolf reports from the Belts, the Crazies, and the Snowies. No packs were confirmed, but those areas will be closely watched in 2008.
- About half of Montana's wolves and wolf packs live in the northern Montana endangered area. There are 37 packs spread across the southern Montana experimental area, with the majority (23) occurring south of Hwy 12 at Lolo Pass and I-90 then easterly to Butte and southerly along I-15 to the Idaho border.
- FWP documented 4 collared wolves that dispersed from their Montana natal pack and 3 started new packs. A male wolf dispersed from near Lethbridge and moved through Montana, settling east of Moscow, Idaho. Six collared wolves went missing and either dispersed or the collar no longer functions.

Outreach Activities

- Increasing public awareness of wolves, wolf management, the federal regulations, and the state's plan is a top priority for FWP. FWP works with local communities to incorporate wolves into the landscape and to strike the balance between wolves and people.
- Outreach efforts take many forms, including one-on-one conversations, media interviews, printed materials, documentary films, FWP Outdoor Reports and press releases, and formal presentations to a wide variety of school, civic, and special interest groups.
- FWP wolf staff gave a minimum of 47 formal presentations to about 2100 people in 2007, but literally spoke to thousands more about wolf ecology, wolf-livestock interactions, wolf-big game interactions, human safety, Montana's wolf plan, federal delisting efforts, etc. Countless media interviews occurred, too. Other FWP staff, USDA Wildlife Services personnel, and our tribal wildlife partners also provided information and did public outreach.
- FWP's wolf management web pages are periodically updated with new information and flight reports. The public can also report wolf activity online. See: www.fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf.

Wolf-Livestock Interactions

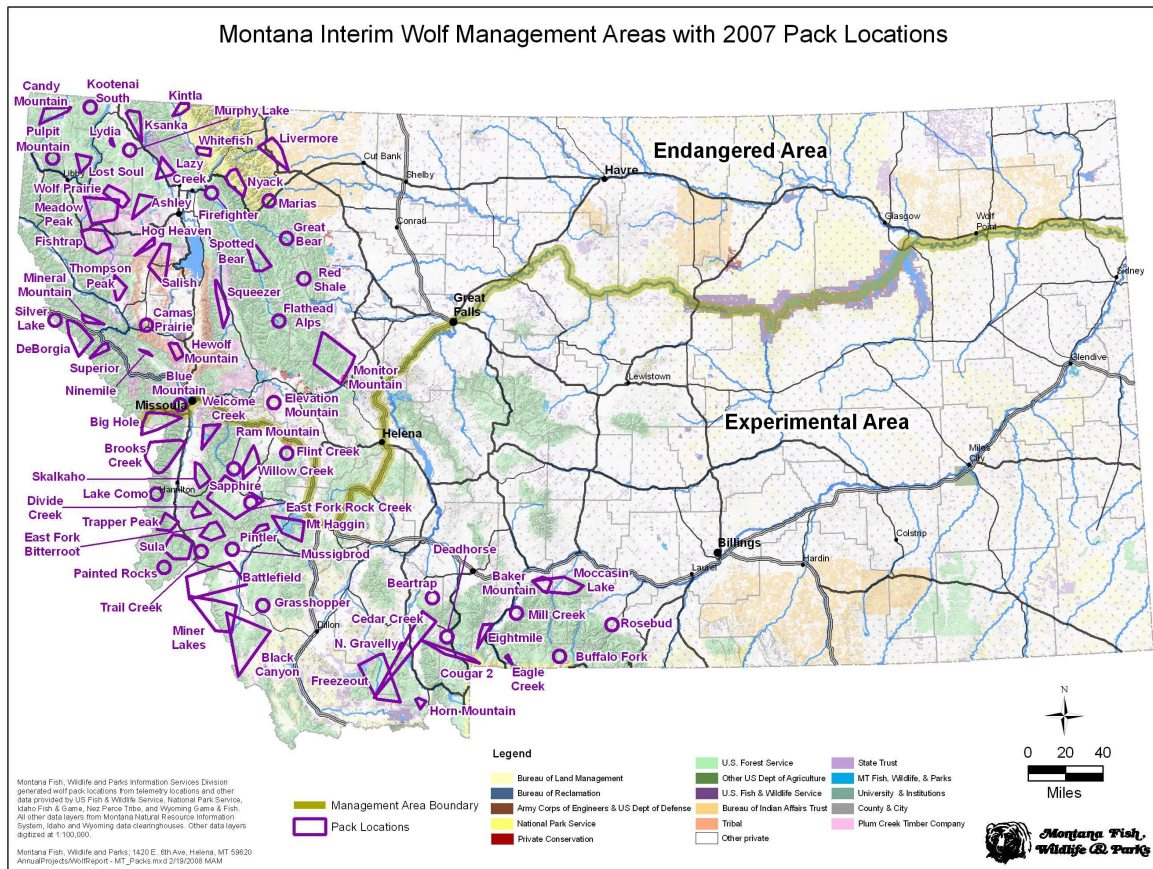
- Montana wolves routinely encounter livestock, though preying on them seems to be a learned behavior. Wolf depredation on livestock is difficult to predict in space and time. Nonetheless, FWP and USDA Wildlife Services (WS) work with livestock producers to decrease risk of loss to the extent possible.
- FWP and WS work together to address conflicts using a combination of non-lethal and lethal tools. Federal regulations and the state plan guide FWP's decision-making. Conflicts are addressed on a case-by-case, incremental basis, striving to connect the agency response to the damage in space and time. This is similar to the approach taken when other wildlife species damage private property in Montana.
- A citizens working group finalized details of a Montana-based wolf reimbursement program. The 2007 Montana Legislature passed HB 364, creating the program and attaching it to the Montana Department of Livestock for administrative purposes. The Governor appointed the Montana Livestock Loss Reduction and Reimbursement Board late in 2007 and its coordinator was hired. The goals are to decrease risk of livestock loss through proactive tools and to reimburse losses. A small amount of start up money was provided by the 2007 Legislature, but fundraising will be a priority of the new Board.
- Confirmed cattle death losses increased from 32 in 2006 to 75 in 2007, and confirmed sheep death losses increased from 4 to 27. A higher percentage of Montana wolf packs killed livestock than in 2006, although 3 packs accounted for 25% of the total cattle losses and 30% of the wolves killed. Nine sheep were killed by 1 pack, and single / lone wolves killed 8 sheep. Two llamas, 12 goats, and 3 dogs were also confirmed killed. Additional losses injuries occurred, but either could not be verified or were determined "probable."
- A total of 73 wolves were killed to prevent further depredations. Private citizens killed 7 wolves caught actively chasing or attacking livestock and 4 wolves by special permit after a confirmed loss, of the 73 total respectively.

Funding and Delisting

- With Montanans' support, FWP took on the added responsibility of wolf conservation and management in 2004, contingent on federal funding. In federal fiscal year 2006 and 2007, Montana got about \$620,000 from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Congress. Montana is focused on securing adequate funding from federal and private sources for the long term.
- In February 2007, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced its intention to delist wolves in the northern Rockies. Late in 2007, USFWS approved the Wyoming plan. Early in February 2008, USFWS announced its decision to delist wolves in Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming, and portions of Oregon, Washington, and Utah. Legal challenges to the federal decision are ongoing and may in fact postpone delisting until all litigation is resolved. For the first half of 2008, the legal situation will be very dynamic.
- In 2007 / 08, FWP and the FWP Commission finalized a wolf hunting season structure. License sales and the hunt will not occur until wolves are successfully delisted. Quotas will be established at a later date.

See: www.fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf

- to read and download the full Montana Wolf Conservation and Management 2007 Annual Report
- to report wolves and wolf sign
- to learn more about wolves, federal regulations, and the state program



Who Do I Contact?

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (to get information about wolves and wolf management):

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Butte Area position is vacant and will be filled in 2008.

USDA Wildlife Services (to request investigations of injured or dead livestock):

Kraig Glazier
West District Supervisor, Helena
406-458-0106 Kraig.L.Glazier@aphis.usda.gov

Jim Hoover
East District Supervisor, Columbus
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To Report a Dead Wolf or Possible Illegal Activity:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
Missoula, Montana: (406) 329-3000
Casper, Wyoming: (307) 261-6365

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks:
1-800-TIP-MONT
Nearest FWP Regional Office or game warden